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The foregoing vocabulary is of the "Vahie" or Vei language, which extends over the following countries:—Cape Mount, Soungrie, Marma, and Gallinas, on the sea coast, and several interior countries. The variety of African languages is so frequently met with, that they may be more properly termed dialects, as the following may prove:—

Vahie.	Courroo.	Kroo.	Fish.
1 Dondo	goonoo	doo	doo
2 Feelah	tierla	song	song
3 Sacpah	tarlee	tah	tah
4 Narnee	teenar	neah	eh
5 Sooloh	noono	moo	d'moo
6 Soo dondo	dia goonoo	moomadoo	neeroo
7 Soo feelah	dia tierla	moomasong	mesoong
8 Soo sacpah	dia tarlee	mumatah	biah biah
9 Soo narnee	dia teenar	munia sussahdoo	chieeroo
10 Tang	zehiar	pouah	poh

Thus the above characters might be arranged into a general African written character.

In concluding, I hope the missionaries or others may follow up what has been thus commenced, as, from the opposite nature of the duties of a naval officer, I could neither spare time, nor hope for the opportunity, of faithfully arranging a grammar or making translations.

Notes on the Vei Language and Alphabet.

By E. NORRIS, Esq.

THOSE who have occupied themselves with investigating the languages of Africa may have heard that an account reached England last year of the discovery, by Lieut. Forbes, of a written character in use by the Vei nation in the interior of Africa, and of the consequent expedition undertaken by the Rev. S. W. Koelle, a German gentleman attached to the Church Missionary Society, and especially connected with the language department, to investigate the matter in the country where the language was spoken and written, some 300 or 400 miles E. of Sierra Leone. Not long after this, the foregoing memoir of Lieut. Forbes reached England, and was read at an evening meeting of the Royal Geographical Society. In the month of September the Church Missionary Society published an interesting narrative of the journey of Mr. Koelle, and of the complete success of his enterprise, together with translations of three manuscripts which he had brought with him from the Vei country. The narrative is probably in the hands of all who are interested in the subject, and it is consequently unnecessary to allude to it any further than to express admiration of the courage and intelligence with which the expedition was carried

out, and of the unpretending way in which it is narrated. The three manuscripts were placed in my hands by the liberality of the Church Missionary Society and the kindness of the Rev. H. Venn, the zealous and able secretary, and I have endeavoured from time to time, at leisure hours, to acquire an insight into the language. It seemed that now, for the first time, we had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the less obvious peculiarities of a negro tongue; every writing in a negro language which had been hitherto within the reach of philologists being either the production of foreigners, or of natives who had been so long under foreign instruction that they may fairly be supposed to have lost something of the original purity of their own languages—to their great advantage, no doubt, but not so much to our purpose. In all cases too we had only translations, and these are unfitted to convey the idiom of a language. The manuscripts in my hands are clearly free from these defects: they are originals, the production of natives unacquainted, or slightly acquainted with European languages, and two of them at least are decidedly unsophisticated. Some of the results of my examination form the subject of these notes. I am sorry to confess that I have not been very successful in getting at the peculiarities of the language. The manuscripts are written without any division between words or sentences; and African languages consisting generally of short words, much encumbered, as *we* should say, with little particles, of which the meaning is not obvious to us, and which particles are now and then really nouns and verbs of importance, there is a continual risk of confounding them with these nouns and verbs, which I fear I have not always escaped. Added to this is the laxity of the translation, my greatest obstacle. I ought to have been prepared for this, for it was clearly impossible that Mr. Koelle should take a long journey in the exhausting climate of Africa, learn a new language and copious character, and translate a hundred and fifty pages into English, all in the interval of a few weeks. He states that he accomplished his task by the aid of some natives who understood English; and there can be no doubt that the books were read and translated roughly into some dialect intelligible to Mr. Koelle, who gave it the English dress in which he sent it home. This will readily account for the laxity we find: the native readers would translate orally what they could easily render, make explanatory comments when they could not find words for short elliptic passages, and skip over what they found too difficult: thus we find whole passages omitted, and short sentences expanded into long ones; names of persons and places set down where the original merely gives a pronoun, and the meaning frequently stated in terms differing wholly from those given by the author. Occasionally I can find no meaning whatever in the original, more particularly in the manuscript

marked D, an odd kind of moral or religious treatise, a mixture of native Negro ideas with some Mohammedan teaching. Notwithstanding this I am still under the greatest obligations to the translation, without which I could not have advanced a step. I have also been aided in the investigation by a slight acquaintance with the rudiments of the Mandingo, a cognate language with the Vei; by a vocabulary of sixty or seventy words in vol. 38 of Silliman's Journal, and recently by Lieut. Forbes's vocabulary, which has been often found valuable as a corroboration or correction of former conjectures. With all these aids it is with great diffidence that the following imperfect notes on the language are hazarded, as I am more than any one aware of the insufficiency of my investigation; in most instances, however, each grammatical statement will be accompanied by a passage in proof from the manuscripts:* this would have been done in all cases, and more copiously, had I not unfortunately mislaid the sheet containing my references, at an advanced period of the research, and I fear I must therefore sometimes make a statement without sufficient proof. The leisure which I have been able to devote to the subject has been very short and frequently interrupted. I am conscious that the work is but half done; and I cannot now read a page without finding some error in former readings.

The alphabet consists of nearly two hundred characters, each representing a syllable, which is usually composed of a consonant and vowel, as *ta, be, si*, &c.; sometimes a nasal closes the syllable, as *bang, deng, sung*, and a few are simple vowels. The plate accompanying will show the transcription adopted in this paper, as well as those given by Lieut. Forbes and the Rev. Mr. Koelle. I have written the syllables of Lieut. Forbes without alteration, but have taken the liberty to change the *dsha, dshe, dshi*, &c., of Mr. Koelle, to the simple *ja, je, ji*. The first division of each column in the plate contains the character as most frequently made in the manuscripts, which may be called the normal form; the second contains the varieties met with, in which those are not included which are produced by turning a letter upside down, sideways, or backwards, a practice very common with certain characters. The three remaining divisions contain the transcriptions of Mr. Koelle and Lieut. Forbes, and the one adopted here. When the character given by Lieut. Forbes differs much from that in the manuscripts, it is placed in the second division, as well as a few which are found in his alphabet only; these are marked with a little cross, and some of them, possibly, are mis-

* The originals are referred to by the letters A, C, and D, and by the number of the line. If these MSS. should ever be published, this will enable a future investigator to test my results; and if not, there is no doubt the Church Missionary Society will afford ready access to persons desirous of consulting the MSS.

takes ; but in one or two cases they give the sound of a character found in the manuscripts and not included in Mr. Koelle's list. In the fourth division there are several blanks, many characters being omitted by Lieut. Forbes as unknown to him ; in fact, at least fifty of the characters are very rarely used, and I have found them only in proper names. A few at the end, which have no transcription, are not given by either Koelle or Forbes, but are found in the manuscripts without a clue to their sound. It has been already said that the pronunciation of two or three such characters may be inferred from Lieut. Forbes's alphabet, and one is given from conjecture : with the addition of *ma*, it evidently signifies "a shirt," and the word for "shirt" is given by Lieut. Forbes as *doungma* ; in one instance, too, the character is substituted for the final syllable of Mandu, the name of a town ; I have therefore called it *du*, and placed it accordingly.

There are two characters in the Syllabarium which have the very different sounds of *hà* and *na*. In the plate one of them is the same form as the other turned upside down. As many of the characters are found in every position, I am inclined to think that these characters are only one, and that they represent the Semitic *y*, an additional trace of a (so-called) Semitic element found in an African language. Like the *ain* it is an obscure sound, little heard by strangers, and confounded by them with *ng*, or *h*. It is thus that in Hebrew grammars we find the technical names of the conjugations which have *y* in the original, written in Roman characters, with *h* ; as *Pihel* and *Puhal*, often pronounced *Pingel* and *Pungal* ; so, in Vei, although the character is written, whenever we have any means of testing the pronunciation we find it little sounded. Thus the word "four" is given as *nani* in our vocabularies, and is *nani* in Mandingo ; in our manuscripts we have sometimes *nani*, sometimes *nanani* or *nahani* : the proper names in which the character is written in the manuscripts are transcribed by Koelle without it, as *Fa Bofe*, D. 502, *Fa Táve*, D. 605 ; in both of these we find *Fana* in the manuscript ; we have *Mana* written *Manana* again and again in manuscript A. In the other characters having the same element the same fact is found ; thus *mo-nu*, men, is occasionally written *mononu*. And the name which Koelle reads *Barakamu*, is made by the syllables *Bálakamono*.

The sound of a word is not always to be accurately known from that of its component syllables : the word "hot," for instance, is written by Lieut. Forbes with characters which he reads *ah pah de ah*, while he reads the whole word *ahpandeah* ; he writes "an ear," *to-loh*, and reads it *toroh*. The same irregularity is found in Mr. Koelle's translation : the name of the inventor of the alphabet he reads *Doalu*, while he reads the letters of his name *dshi*

a *lu*,* or *dshi a du*; the name of *Surufure* he spells *So lu fo lá*, or *So du fo lü*; *Jara kala*, in his alphabet is *Ja la kà na la*, or *Ja da kà na la*, and so on with many of the names in the manuscripts. In all this we find nothing more than what is common in our own language, and therefore the orthography followed in this paper is as likely to represent the sound of the language as either of the others, and it certainly has the advantage of a distinct representation for every different character. It is probable that several characters are used for the same sound, though the meaning is different where a different character is used. The similarity of sound is inferred from the circumstance that one character is sometimes substituted for another, though there may be slight differences not readily appreciable by strangers; and, in fact, something like the Chinese tones has been suspected by persons who have heard the pronunciation of certain Negro tribes. The consonants *d*, *r*, and *l*, seem to be distinguishable with difficulty, and the same word is often written with either; *da* and *la* are perpetually confounded.

I now proceed to the grammar, observing first, that the collocation of Dr. Latham, who, in his able paper on the African languages, published in the Report of the British Association for 1847, places the Vei among the cognates of the Mandingo, is perfectly correct. The noun, as in other Negro languages, has no inflection; all its modifications appear to be made by placing particles after it; the plural takes *nu* (the Mandingo *lu*), as *mo*, a person, *mo-nu*, persons; *musu*, a woman, *musu-nu*, women. Other particles generally follow *nu*, as *mo-nu-ye*, to men; *musu-nu-ye*, to women.

The nominative case very frequently receives the particle *wa*, or *wá*, when it is the subject of a verb; examples are: *mo-nu-wá moya-nu fá*, D. 542, the men killed the men; *Gotolu-wá Jala Büdu bi*, D. 536, Goturu seized Jarabulo; *Gotolu-wá Gbako fá*, D. 542, Goturu killed Baku; *Wannyawe-le-wá a fo Bilang-la*, A. 23, Wonyawere he said to Bilang. The particle *ye* is used precisely in a similar way in the Mandingo language; Macbrair gives several examples, and he believes the particle to be merely separative, placed to distinguish the nominative from the governed words which follow. This is not unlikely, but the particle is certainly used in Vei where no governed word follows, though I cannot cite any instance. *Wá* is once used in a dative, *a-wa-ye*, D. 695, to her. In a phrase of frequent occurrence in one

* *Dish*, in the alphabet given in the plate accompanying the Narrative; but this must be an error of the lithographer for "dshi," a sound which we represent by *ji*, and Lieut. Forbes by *jee*. This particular character Lieut. Forbes makes *dua*, in which we follow him.

of the manuscripts, *ye* is used as in Mandingo; it is *gbolu-ye ro*, the book says.

I find something exceedingly like an accusative case, which, however, I have some difficulty in admitting the existence of in a Negro tongue, and yet the character which forms it is rarely used in any other way; the character, too, is unlike the others, being made of four dots in a perpendicular line, as though intended to be separate; its sound is *me*. It is of frequent use, as *a ni patáwa roro-me bila*, D. 207, he must dollar one take; *anu la maja-me gbi kéle*, A. 19, they did the gentlemen all call.* Still more frequently, perhaps, *me* is omitted; but it appears a characteristic of African languages to omit the particles of case, number, time, &c., when the passage is plain without them.

The genitive is sometimes made by simple apposition, as *Sau bólu*, A. 15, Sau's hand; *Rora fa*, c. 45, Rora's father; *Tato ja mo-nu*, c. 140, people of Tatu's town; *Rora mamá gbálo mo-nu la bá fá*, c. 123, Rora's grandmother's town's-people did a goat kill; but more frequently by the particle *la*, or *da*: as *a fa-la Pohu mo*, c. 195, his father's white man; *mangja-da dengna*, c. 422, king's daughter. I have once found *wa*, as *nyomo-wa deng*, c. 115, brother's son.

Other cases are made by *la*, or *ye*, to; *fe*, after; *lo*, in, or into, &c., as *kai-ye*, D. 202, to a man; *i ta fo Gotolu-ye*, D. 499, you go tell to Goturu; *i a tála kahu-la*, D. 422, you carry it to the moon; *u sâ a-fe*, A. 200, you send after him; *mowá mo sâwa i-fe*, A. 36, we a man send after you; *a bólu-lo*, c. 17, in his hand; *ariyane-lo*, D. 2, into heaven; *ja-lo fera*, D. 68, look into the face.

It is possible that the particle *ni* may be a real preposition, meaning at, or to; it seems to occur in such phrases as *deng mu ulu ni Vai*, c. 47, a son who was born in Vei; *na ni Jondu*, c. 14, came to Jondu; *Rora be Date ta ni Táto ja*, c. 144, Rora and Date went to Tatu's town. I am rather inclined to think *ni* a termination to the preceding verb, making *uhuni*, *nani*, *tani*, though I do not see its meaning yet. I do not like to admit a preposition; *be* may be considered as a conjunction.

Adjectives appear like substantives, with hardly a shade of difference; and they follow the substantive. I find nothing like degrees of comparison.

Personal pronouns are *ng*, I; *i*, thou; *a*, he or she; *mowa* or *muwa*, we; *u*, ye; *anu*, they. These are Mandingo in the singular, but not in the plural. All these pronouns are constructed as nouns, with the same particles; as *a-wá mo sâ*,

* For the better understanding of the meaning, I translate word for word, where there is any possibility of mistaking the respective values of the words.

D. 490, he sent a person ; *u-wa je*, D. 217, ye see ; *a ba be a fa*, c. 7, his mother and his father ; *a bólu*, c. 15, her hand ; *ng-la kura*, D. 72, my word ; *i-la*, c. 301, to you ; *a-ye*, c. 152, for him ; *a-fe*, A. 200, after him. *Muwa*, we, is divisible ; as *mu na wa*, A. 83, we are come, for *muwa na*. Perhaps *mu* is the original word ; in some phrases "we" is expressed by *mu-nu*, as *mu ta nu*, c. 90, we go ; see also A. 56, 63 ; and *mu* in one case stands alone ; *ni mu ma kóng gbâ-me dong*, D. 690, must we not tree-plums eat. Once I find *umu*, D. 546, meaning we, in the sense of the inclusive we of the Polynesian, Manchu, and Malay languages, "you and I." When *I* or *thou* is made plural by the addition of a third person, the plural pronouns are generally used instead of the singular, as, *mu be Sau*, A. 123, I and Sau (literally, we and Sau) ; *u be mo*, c. 518, thou and the man (literally, you and the man), as though the speaker thought of himself or of the person he addressed, and of the third person together as a plural, and then added the name which made up the plural. I do not remember this in any other language, but it is very general in Vei, and may perhaps be found in other African languages.

The possessive pronouns are obvious from the examples given of the personals ; but *lalo* is used occasionally in the genitive instead of *la* only ; *u ng-lalo kura bila*, D. 220, you my word keep. See D. 266, 231.

The demonstrative pronouns are *ke*, this, and *u*, that ; and in confirmation of the opinion that the conjunction "that" is a pronoun, we find *ke* used in the same way, *a ro ke a ko-nyama firi*, D. 96, he says that he made evil. See also l. 217. Several instances of this construction were collected, but they are mislaid. I think *nyinya* means "this," but I am not yet sure.

The relative is *mu*, and it is placed immediately after the antecedent, as, *a ko bera mu je*, c. 1, the good which he saw (literally, he thing good which saw) ; *jon mu a fála*, A. 14, the slave who is dead (slave who he is dead) ; *Gotolu a mo mu sâ*, D. 514, the man whom Goturu sent (G. he man who sent) ; it is sometimes placed before the sign of the plural, as *mo mu nu*, D. 245, the men who.

The interrogation is *Jo* ; *jo kani ng-la kura*, D. 72, who broke my word ?

The verbs are simple, and I have as yet discovered no irregularities. When the time is clear from the context no mark of tense is used, and nothing more is required than to put the verb in its simple state after the nominative, as, *a ta*, c. 1, he went ; *anu ta*, c. 42, they went ; *a fo musuya-ye*, c. 177, he said to the woman ; *mowá mo sâ*, A. 35, we send a man ; *u-wa je*, D. 217, you see ; if the nominative is not a pronoun, the pronoun is often added, as *Sau a fála*, A. 9, Sau he died. When the past time is expressed, it is done by adding *da* or *la* ; as *a da tiya fela fá a-ye*,

c. 152, she did fowls two kill for him; *a la a gbóyá gbi kéle*, c. 159, he did his family all call. The *la* or *da* appears to follow some verbs with the same meaning, as *ng jang-la i-la*, c. 301, I have spoken to you; *a jang-da Bálakamoŋo-la*, c. 56, he spoke to Barakamu; *anu-wa anu bi-la*, D. 534, they took them; *a báwala bi-la*, c. 209, he took a sheep; *Bílang dau-la*, A. 26, Bilang assented; but as *la* is frequently a verb, a preposition, or a termination to a noun, I am uncertain as to this: there may be a modification of meaning in this additional syllable, as *fá* is to kill, and *fála*, to die: *ji-la*, to show, may be the causative of *ji*, to see, but this would be a reversal of the effect of *la* in *fála*. The future of obligation is *ni*; as, *i ni ta*, c. 371, you must go; *u ni a mi*, A. 256, you must drink it; *i ni mo sâ*, c. 48, you must send a man; *anu ni kura gbang*, A. 191, they must say the word. The ordinary future is *be*, as in Mandingo; *ng be jáng*, c. 180, I shall speak; *ng be i fá*, c. 350, I shall kill you. I think *be* is the verb substantive.

Other modifications of time or mood are made by other particles, as *nu*, *ta*, *ní*, *ma*, &c., but they have not yet been examined carefully; *ma* before a verb denotes a negative, as, *a ma ng riya*, c. 440, she did not love me; *a ma musu to a bólu-lo*, c. 16, she did not leave a woman in his hand. *Wele* and *bele* also are negatives. The first probably means cannot; *anu wele ta*, D. 491, they cannot go.

The infinitive mood seems to end sometimes in *na*; as, *i ni mo sâ a bina*, c. 48, you must man send, him to fetch; *u ta fá bina*, A. 25, you go the corpse to fetch. The Mandingo equivalent form is *la*, but the infinitive is often found without any addition, as, *i ta a tusa*, D. 509, you go and ask him; *i ta fo Gotolu-ye*, D. 499, you go tell Goturu. In some cases the particle *nu* seems to designate the potential mood, like *no* in Mandingo, as in the sentence *ng bele ta nu*, c. 138, I cannot go (I not go can), but I have found *nu* in many cases when I cannot seize its meaning.

There are several syllables of frequent occurrence joined to nouns and verbs, which I cannot determine. We find, for instance, *musuma* and *musuya* a woman, as well as *musu*: also *kaiya* and *kaima* a man, as well as *kai*; *deng*, *dengma*, and *dengna* is a son or daughter; *báwa* and *báwala* a sheep. In verbs we find *ki* and *kiya* to sleep; *ké* and *kéya* to obtain; *yarake* and *yarawake* to laugh; *riyá* and *riyáni* to love, and many others: these must be left to more extended comparison and closer investigation.

In adverbs and conjunctions my stock is very small. *Amu* is a word of constant use, meaning *and*; it is employed [to connect sentences; *hi* connects words, but is more sparingly used; *kera* is, I think, but, and *akomu*, or *komu*, therefore; *koni*, or *koninya*, is if; *Gbówa* and *gbó* is, off, or away, and it certainly has a verbal signi-

fication, as in the elliptical phrase, "away with it." Examples are *ng gbówa Gbóngbái*, A. 38, I (went) from Gbombai; *a-wá gbówa lala*, A. 155, he (fetched) away a mat; *a ba gbówa Jonlu*, c. 6, his mother (came) from Jondu; *a mo-nu gbó*, c. 112, he (sent) away the men. *Gbéng* or *gbáng* at the end of a sentence is, I think, "when," as, *ng kényá Búdakólo-wa gbéng*, A. 43, when I reached Bandakoro; but I have yet hardly touched this part of the investigation.

The only portion of the Syntax I can see through is very simple. The general rule seems to be to put the nominative first, followed by the accusative, if any, and then the verb; if there be a noun or pronoun in the sentence connected with a preposition, it follows the verb. Examples are *Jala ro*, D. 491, Jara said; *a-wa mo sâ*, D. 490, he sent a man; *a da fo a-ye*, c. 139, he did say to him; *a la kura gbóng Táto-ye*, c. 146, he did a word say to Tatu. The negative precedes the verb; *i ma lau*, D. 24, you do not assent; *anu ma a deng Mañana tála*, A. 194, they did not meet his son Mana. Adverbs come after the verb: *Sari-wá mo sâ niye Gotolu-bála*, D. 498, Sandi sent a man here to Goturu. The infinitive comes after the verb: *i ta a tusa*, D. 509, you go to ask him; *a-wá mo sâ Gáno anu bina*, D. 490, he sent a man to Gano to fetch them. Names of places are generally without prepositions; *anu-wá ta Gáno*, D. 489, they went to Gano; *anu na fá la Belenonyi*, c. 108, they came to bring the corpse to Belewoi. Sentences are frequently closed by the syllable *u*, and more completely by *he*, which means "hear." Sometimes both are used, which would be, "you hear." This is probably the original meaning, though it seems now lost, as I find it at the close of an address to a single person, as, *a ro, na bang jang-la, i ta-wá, u he*, c. 306, he said, I have finished my speech, now go.

The above are the scanty notes on the language that I have been able to get together. In addition to the points of resemblance with the Mandingo language incidentally given in them, it may be found interesting to give a brief list of words, showing the glossarial connection of the two languages, and most of them will be taken from Lieutenant Forbes's vocabulary, given above. But in order to use his vocabulary with effect, I must first point out some prevailing errors in it, without meaning in the smallest degree to detract from the merit of that officer, whose discovery is highly creditable to him, and who is entitled to the gratitude of the philologist for the patience with which he has obtained so many vocables, and on the whole with so few errors. It may be believed that most vocabularies so obtained would be found more erroneous if we had the same means of testing them; and, after all, it is not sure that in assuming an error I may not be displaying my own insufficient knowledge. I think Lieutenant

Forbes's informant often defined words instead of translating them; "air" is made, "wind comes to you;" "fever" is, "his skin is hot;" "thirsty," "I want to drink water;" "invite," "you call to the house;" "free," "son of a chief," or "little chief;" "less" is, "thing not big." The adjectives are preceded by *a*, meaning, I think, "he is," or "it is." *Hhumbah* is my mother, and, I think, *nah moosu*, my wife; *nah kah*, my husband; *na ding*, my son. The verbs are generally preceded by some one or two of the pronouns *ng*, *i*, *a*, *I*, *thqu*, *he*: we thus find, you buy it, I love you, you have opened, he stabs me, instead of the simple verb. The pronouns are more difficult to obtain from a man unused to grammatical distinctions; and we thus find *kaiemeh*, a person, and *mohmehnoo*, men, both in what may be the accusative case, for "he" and "they." The possessives are made by adding *tahmun* (támu) to the primitives, and *tahmun* (belonging) is used alone for "my." Most of the other pronominals I fail in recognizing, nor do I know what they ought to be. Notwithstanding these errors, which are easily corrected, I have found much assistance from Lieutenant Forbes's vocabulary, and I must repeat, that in hazarding these strictures, I do it with diffidence, having mostly no other guide than conjecture. There are many points in the language through which I do not see my way, and I cannot explain any thing beyond the simplest sentences without the aid of the translation.

The following list is very short, but it appeared unnecessary to take more than a few words, and to select such as show the connection with Mandingo and Bambarra most readily, with few organic changes. The verbs from Forbes's vocabulary are given without the appended pronouns, and all his words are spelled as in the MSS. when I have been able to find them. Those not found are marked with a star. The Bambarra words are marked B.

Vei.		Mandingo, &c.
kéle	to call	akilli
na	to come	na
dang *	to count	adang B
mi	to drink	imi B
dong	to eat	adum B
dóng	to enter	dung
ta	to go	ta
fá	to kill	fa
sina *	to lend	assingna
fáni	to tell lies	fonio
kóri	to quarrel	kiri B
bóri	to run	buri
ji	to see	eaji
dari	to spit	dajio
fo	to tell	fo

Specimen of M.S.

[illegible]

Inscription on the House.



Vei.		Mandingo, &c.
ma *	to touch	ma
ulu	to be born	awulu
sulu	a root	sulo
tamba *	a spear	tamba
ulu *	a dog	wulo
kó	salt	ko
jale *	red	zioli B
sang	a year	sang B
kalo	a month	kalo B
saama	morning	somo
suro	night	suto
tele	sun	tili
jang	long	jang
mo	person	mo
kai	man	kea
musu	woman	muso
bólu	hand	bulo
minye	sword	benye
ariyane	heaven	ariyena
jahanama	hell	jahaniba

It would be easy to extend this list of similar words to many times its length; but a false idea of the resemblance of the languages would be conveyed without the statement that the number of words in Vei having no apparent connection with the Mandingo dialects is larger than that of the words which are alike.

A fac-simile of a page of one of the MSS. is added as a specimen of the character and language: a page has been selected, of which the printed translation is the closest I have been able to find. The transcription is divided into words, and accompanied by an interlinear version, where I could ascertain the meaning of the words.

gbówa; anu kiyá Morobáwâ táng gbé, amu anu sâwa Báisa
 they sleep at Little Cape Mount ten times, and they go to Bassa
 kilafé, anu ta awa kaka, amu anu káyá Bangjóju ja, amu a mo sâ
 back? they go on? long-time, and they reach Bayoju's town, and he man send
 Rora fa bála, a ro, yá yá, deng mu ulu ni Vai ke, a na niye, a
 Rora's father to, he say, O, O, son who born in? Vei this, he come here, he
 ro i ni mo sâ a bina kilafé; gbolu-ye ro, mo mu ta ke awa
 say you must man send him to fetch back; book say, man who go this he
 tâng Bála Kamóno; a Rora fa tála.
 is named Bara Kamú; he Rora's father met.

The translation of Mr. Koelle is as follows:—

“On his journey he slept at Little Cape Mount ten times; then he took the Basa path and walked a long time, till he reached the place of Bayodshu. Then they sent a message by Bara Kamú, to Rora's

father, saying, the son whom you begat in Vei has come here, therefore send hither to fetch him. Bara Kamu met Rora's father."

With respect to the question of the fitness of this character for the language in which it is adopted, the rapid way in which it has spread through the country where it was invented, seems to be decisive. Within a very few years after its first promulgation, we find it written and read by large numbers of all ages, in as great a proportion perhaps as readers and writers are found in most countries of Europe, and taught in regular schools until war broke up the establishments and dispersed the teachers. Even now, in Bandakoro, the chief Vei town, "all the grown up people of the male sex are more or less able to read and to write."* And this, be it observed, was wholly uninfluenced by European teaching, while all our endeavours have barely sufficed to induce a single tribe to adopt the Roman alphabet generally. We may, therefore, suppose that a syllabic alphabet is more suited to the ability, or, it may be, caprice of a negro, than our analytic alphabets. Again, all people receive inventions of their own with greater favour than foreign importations: the Armenians are said to have used for ages the Greek and Syriac alphabets, and they produced with them little, if anything, which has come down to us; but in the fifth century, when Mesrop invented what we think his clumsy alphabet, they immediately began to write, and they produced in the following centuries a respectable literature, original and translated, which might vie in quantity with that of most European nations of the same period. The invention of the Arabic alphabet, in the sixth century, seems to have had the same result among the Arabs. The Cherokees, thirty years ago, invented a syllabarium; they immediately began writing and printing it, and they even produced a good newspaper: the development of this germ of civilization, the first of the kind ever displayed by a native American tribe, was checked, and probably destroyed, by the barbarian policy of the local government of Georgia.

Irrespective of these considerations it may admit of a question whether a syllabarium may not be better suited than our alphabets, to a language of so simple a syllabic structure as the Vei, the number of whose sounds is so limited; and, moreover, when many words in a language have the same sound with a different meaning, it must be difficult to understand a system of writing which conveys the sound only. Many nations do make a variation in spelling for such cases: thus we write sent, cent, and scent; pare, pear, and pair. The French too write parler, parlé, parlais, parlait, parlaient; in each case with a different meaning, but the same sound; and there can be no doubt that such non-phonetic

* Narrative, p. 25.

variations add much to the facility of reading. In the Vei language these differences of meaning with the same sound appear to be very much more numerous than in English or French, and we hardly see how the difficulty is to be got over without some such system as that in question, unless we would have recourse to such a plan as is adopted from necessity in this paper, which is certainly more difficult to be learned by a person ignorant of both systems. It is true that the number of characters is large, but more than a quarter of them are of rare occurrence, being only used for Names, probably for the sake of distinction, like our capital letters, and these might be retrenched by the use of a larger character for such a purpose. It must be remembered too that when the syllabarium is learned the art of reading is acquired, while with us the learning of the alphabet is the smallest part of the work, and children know their alphabet perfectly a long time before they are able to read. It would be too much to recommend the casting of types, but with the facilities offered by lithography, it might be worth while to try how far the translation and dissemination of a few tracts in a simple style may be available to awake a spirit of inquiry which may ultimately result in the civilization of the negro.

To judge from the structure of the language, the same character would be equally available for the Bambarra, Mandingo, and Susu nations, with populations of several millions, spread over a large surface of Africa.

VII.—*Observations on the Geography of Texas.* By WILLIAM BOLLAERT, Esq., F.R.G.S.

[Read January 14, 1850.]

TEXAS, once a province of Mexico, was wrested from it a few years since by a handful of American farmers, who in an incredibly short period erected their conquest into an independent Republic, which was recognized as such by the United States and by several European governments, and but very lately became annexed to America as one of the Federal States of the Union.

Its coast boundary begins at the Sabine River, runs along the Gulf of Mexico to the Rio Grande del Norte, a distance of 400 miles; thence up said stream to its source, which has recently been laid down in about 40° N., 109° 30' W., running N. on this meridian to 42° N., and eastward along that parallel to 107° 30' W., then S. on that meridian to the Arkansas River; thence down the Arkansas to 100° W.; thence by Red River to 94° W.; thence by a straight line south to the Sabine in lat. 32° N., and from thence to its mouth.

As early as 1528, Narvaez, one of the lieutenants of Cortez,
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